



NEWS RELEASE

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Man Sentenced to Prison for 1981 Cold Case Killing

A 53-year-old man was sentenced yesterday to 24 years in state prison for the 1981 rape and killing of a woman, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Joseph Allen Thornton pleaded no contest yesterday to four felonies: voluntary manslaughter, rape, digital penetration by force and sodomy by force in case VA124506.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Yvonne T. Sanchez also ordered the defendant to register as a sex offender for life.

Deputy District Attorney Diana Martinez, who prosecuted the case, said Thornton raped and killed Blanca Stella Negrete, 21, on June 27, 1981, in Whittier.

At the time of the slaying, detectives had exhausted all leads and the case eventually went cold, the prosecutor said.

The Whittier Police Department reopened the nearly 30-year-old case in May 2010 and identified Thornton as the perpetrator through a DNA hit.

The defendant was arrested by police on April 18, 2012, at a residence in Auburn, Calif. and has remained in custody since his apprehension.

The case was investigated by Whittier Police Department.

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[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety.